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ABSTRACT

This paper presents information regarding the geographic distribution of Indochinese refugees in the United States and how it compares to that of the overall U.S. population and the non-refugee legal immigrant population. The following information is reported: Seventy percent of all Indochinese refugees currently reside in 10 States, with one-third of these living in California. In contrast, 53.8 percent of overall U.S. population and 80.6 percent of other immigrants live in these States. This pattern of immigrant residency has remained virtually the same in the past 40 years, as has the proportion of aliens who have chosen to reside in New York and California--the two most populous States. Further, a number of immigrant groups are more concentrated than the Southeast Asians; these include Dominicans, Mexicans, Filipinos, and Hispanics in general. Based on these data, it is argued that there are concerns about U.S. placement policy that have little to do with statistics used to demonstrate "over-concentration," and that these underlying issues should be addressed directly. These issues include: (1) definition of settlement/placement goals; (2) placement and self sufficiency; (3) placement and local impact; (4) initial placement and secondary migration; (5) timing of placement strategies; (6) factors guiding placement choices; and (7) roles and responsibilities of the various agencies concerned with resettlement. (GC)

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THE GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES

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This paper presents information regarding the geographic distribution of refugees in the United States--information collected by RPG as part of a project focusing on the inter-relationships among placement policy, refugee impact and self-sufficiency. It is not RPG's intention, at this time, to analyze the full meaning or implications of these data. Such analysis will be presented in future reports. Rather, the purpose of this communication is to share interim findings and to raise questions that should be considered in assessing future policy directions.

Since 1975, the goal of U.S. placement policy for Indochinese refugees has been dispersal. As early as June 15, 1975, the Interagency Task Force on Indochinese Refugees described its placement policy as follows:

> "The Interagency Task Force has promulgated two general guidelines in an effort to influence areas of resettlement: 1) to avoid resettlement in areas of high unemployment; and 2) to avoid high concentrations of refugees in any specific community."*

The statistics on current refugee placements are familiar to most persons involved in refugee resettlement: roughly 70 percent of all Indochinese refugees currently reside in 10 states, with about one-third living in California. Seen another way, about 60 percent of the Southeast Asian refugees are located in

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*Dispersal was not a new goal. A 1955 report on immigration described the following as a major goal of the displaced persons program: "they wished to spread newcomers as widely as possible through the whole country." Yet, according to the report, secondary migration quickly followed: "...almost at once the newcomers began to move. They drifted away from the northeast and the south toward the Pacific Coast and the north central states. They transferred their residences from rural to urban places, particularly to cities over 100,000 in population. (The Positive Contribution by Immigrants. A symposium prepared for Unesco by the International Sociological Association and the International Economic Association, 1955.)

40 counties in the United States.

These figures, by themselves, have little meaning. To determine if refugees are overly-concentrated, it is necessary to have a frame of reference; otherwise, it is impossible to analyze these patterns. In this paper, refugee geographic distribution is compared to that of the overall U.S. population and non-refugee legal immigrants. The comparison with legal immigrants is particularly useful because they, like refugees, are new arrivals to the U.S.

The following table shows the proportions of Indochinese refugees, legal immigrants and the overall U.S. population in U.S. states:

Rank Ordering of States by Number of Persons	U.S. Population[1]	Indochinese[2] Refugees	Immigrants[3]
10 Most Populous	53.8%	69.9%	80.6%
11th-20th	21.6%	15.5%	11.2%
21st-30th	14.1%	9.0%	4.9%
31st-40th	7.3%	4.3%	1.0%
41st-51st*	3.3%	1.3%	1.0%

[1]Bureau of the Census
[2]Office of Refugee Resettlement, "Southeast Asian Refugees: Cumulative State Populations Including Entries from 1975 through August 31, 1982
[3]Immigration and Naturalization Service, "Alien Population by State of Residence, 1979 Alien Address Program. Immigrant population includes a small proportion of Indochinese, about 134,000 out of a total of 5 million who reported to INS.

*State rankings include District of Columbia.

As the chart indicates, refugees are more concentrated that the U.S. population (69.9% compared to 53.8% in the 10 States with the largest number of each group), but they are less concentrated than immigrants (69.9% compared to 80.6%), who, by and large, choose for themselves where they will reside in the United States.

The pattern of initial settlement of refugees and immigrants demonstrate even more disparity between the two groups:

Rank Ordering of States by Number of Aliens Initially Settling	Refugees[1]	Immigrants[2]
10 Most Populous	65.4%	79.4%
11th-20th	18.0%	12.1%
21st-30th	5.0%	9.4%
31st-40th	2.8%	5.8%
41st-51st*	1.0%	1.7%

[1]Office of Refugee Resettlement, "Southeast Asian Refugee Arrivals, Year-to-Date FY 1982 (as of August 31, 1-982)
[2]Immigration and Naturalization Service, "Immigrants Admitted by States of Intended Permanent Residence, 1979". Immigrants include a small proportion of Vietnamese who adjusted their status--about 5,000 out of 460,000.

*State rankings include District of Columbia.

Almost 80 percent of arriving immigrants indicated that they intended to settle in 10 States, whereas 65 percent of arriving refugees were placed in 10 States, a 15 percent difference.

The pattern of immigrant residency has remained remarkedly the same during the past forty years. In 1940, 80.6 percent of aliens were concentrated in 10 States, and in 1970, 83.3 percent were living in 10 States.

The proportion of aliens who have chosen to reside in the top two States (New York and California in 1970; California and New York in 1979) has also remained substantially the same. In both 1970 and 1979, 46 percent of legally admitted aliens indicated that they would reside in these two States. This

figure is similar to the Indochinese concentration in the top two States (California and Texas), which account for 43 percent of the population. (Texas, it should be noted, ranked third in immigrant arrivals in 1979.)

A number of immigrant groups are significantly more concentrated than are the Southeast Asians. In 1979, for example, 70.4 percent of all Dominicans indicated that they would live in New York: 74.4 percent of all Mexicans in California and Texas; and 46.4 percent of all Filipinos in California. Residence patterns also show higher concentrations. Recent census figures show that more than 40% of all Hispanics counted in the 1980 census lived in 9 metropolitan areas--Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Chicago, San Antonio, Houston, San Francisco, El Paso and Riverside/Anaheim. By contrast, as noted above, 60 percent of Indochinese refugees live in 40 counties.

Some immigrants groups are small in number and therefore do not account for a substantial number of arrivals in any given State. This is not true of all groups though. For example, over 300,000 Filipinos are estimated to have entered the U.S. between 1975 and 1982; if the 46.4 percent figure cited above remained constant, almost 150,000 of them were planning to settle in California.* During the same period, just over 150,000 Indochinese were placed in that State. (Neither figure includes secondary migration into or out of the State, and do not, therefore, indicate numbers actually resident in California.)

Given the greater concentration overall of immigrants, it is not unreasonable to reverse the question often heard about refugee placements. Rather than ask why the Southeast Asian population is overly-concentrated in a few States, perhaps we should ask why are refugees dispersed more broadly then immigrants and much more similar to the dispersal pattern of the U.S. population itself?

*The most recent statistice are not available regarding the numbers of immigrants from specific countries or their place of intended residence; this estimate assumes that roughly the same pattern of arrivals that can be documented for the years 1970-1979 would hold true for those arriving between 1980 and 1982.

Depending on one' frame of reference, either question makes sense.

The point of this data analysis, however, is to ask neither question. Instead, it is to argue that there are concerns about U.S. placement policy that have little to do with statistics used to demonstrate "over-concentration," and that these underlying issues should be addressed directly. In other words, the fact that 70 percent of Indochinese refugees are located in 10 States is not the issue, since that statistic can be used to indicate either high concentrations or substantial dispersal. It is, however, a proxy for other issues.

What, then, are the issues? The ones raised most often pertain to the relationship between refugee numbers in a given location and the impact of the refugee program on receiving communities and self-sufficiency. Since the direction of this relationship is unclear--under what circumstances concentrations impede or foster self-sufficiency and increase or decrease negative impacts--policy decisions are made difficult. What is clear is that facile judgments should not be made about the effects of either concentration or dispersal of refugees in setting policy.

To make informed decisions regarding placement policy, consideration should be given to a wide variety of factors. The following questions are presented to stimulate this process:

- Definition of Goals--Should dispersal of refugees continue to be the primary goal of refugee placement policy, as it has been since the Displaced Persons program? Are there circumstances under which refugee concentrations should be encouraged, as a matter of public policy?
- Placement and Self-Sufficiency--What is the relationship between placement strategies and refugee achievement of self-sufficiency? Are refugees who live in highly concentrated areas more or less likely to achieve self-sufficiency--in the short and long terms? What have been the effects of recent changes in placement policy[1] and recently implemented programs (such as the Khmer Guided Placement Program[2] and the Favored Area Sites Program[3]) on self-sufficiency? To what extent should/should not immigrant patterns (i.e., self-placements, high concentrations and a largely successful record of economic progress in the U.S.) serve as models for the refugee program?
- Placement and Local Impact--What is the relationship between placement strategies and the impact of refugee resettlement on receiving communities? What are the effects of newly placed refugees, those in the community for some period of time, and secondary migrants? What are the effects of refugees who arrive at the beginning of a refugee flow versus those who come to a community later in the flow? What are the effects of programs

to redirect the flow of refugees away from areas with high concentrations on the refugees remaining in the "impacted" communities and the communities themselves? Are the negative effects of refugees in areas with high concentration greater or lesser than the effects of refugees in areas with smaller numbers?

- Initial Placement and Secondary Migration—What is the relationship between initial placement strategies (i.e., dispersal, family reunification, cluster, etc.) and secondary migration of refugees?
- Timing of Placement Strategies--Which placement strategies make most sense at the beginning, middle or end of a refugee flow?
- Factors Guiding Placement Choices--What factors should be taken into account in determining the placement of refugees in a particular location? In what ways do the legitimate concerns of voluntary agencies, government units and refugees differ in assessing a location's desirability? How can differing concerns be balanced for effective placement?
- Roles and Responsibilities—What are the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies concerned with resettlement in determining and implementing placement strategies?

[1]The Departments of State and HHS and the Voluntary Resettlement Agencies have signed a letter of agreement, recognizing as a fundamental principle of placement policy "that the distribution and placement of refugees be done in a manner which will reduce further impact on certain communities and to avoid creating new areas of high impact in the future." Refugee impact is defined as a situation in which "continued arrivals of refugees into an area would result in a drain on community resources of sufficient magnitude to materially affect the quality of services to the general community, and would be detrimental to the refugees prospects for the timely achievement of self-sufficiency." The parties to the agreement agreed that free cases (and on a case by case basis, relatives who are not immediate family members) will not be resettled in areas of high impact, except under special circumstances, as determined in consulation with the Department of State.

[2]The Khmer Guided Placement Project, designed to reduce the flow of refugees to Long Beach, California, created new settlements in twelve sites. The KGP project was characterized by the following features: the clustering of refugees of the same ethnic background in the same geographic area; joint planning by national voluntary agencies; formal involvement of refugee mutual assistance associations; selection of sites based on analysis of the capacity to absorb new arrivals and the availability of services; and joint planning and staffing at the local community level.

[3]Favored Area Site Placement Project, being developed by the Office of Refugee Resettlement, has designated as favored area sites, communities that do not now have sizeable numbers of refugees but are willing to receive placements. These sites will be provided additional social service funds to enable them to develop English-as-a-Second Language and employment services that are suitable for refugees.